



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

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Investigative Report

2012-0056

February 14, 2013

Christopher T. Hirst
Inspector General

Keith R. Parks
Chief of Investigations

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accountability and integrity of State Government.”*



Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and
Advance Personal and Family Recovery



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DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Investigative Report
Case Number: 2012-0056



Christopher T. Hirst
Inspector General

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Children and Families (Department) Office of Child Welfare in Circuit 11 (Miami-Dade County) is responsible for investigating allegations of abuse, neglect, abandonment, or exploitation involving children received by the Florida Abuse Hotline¹ (Hotline). Once the Hotline accepts an abuse report, a Florida Safe Families Network² (FSFN) Intake Identification (Intake ID) number is generated and that information is then forwarded to the appropriate Department Circuit for review and investigation.

On May 5, 2012, Circuit 11 Operations Program Administrator Sonia De Escobar reported to the Office of Inspector General (OIG) that former Circuit 11 Child Protective Investigator (CPI) Jean LaCroix³ was alleged to have engaged in conduct unbecoming a Department employee as a result of his alleged unlawful sexual activity with a 16-year old minor child⁴ (the Department Client). On the same day (May 5, 2012), a call was also placed to the Hotline to report the allegation (FSFN Intake ID #2012-104414-01), and as a result, a subsequent criminal investigation was initiated by the Miami-Dade Police Department⁵ (MDPD) on May 7, 2012.

Based on the information provided by Ms. De Escobar, an administrative investigation was initiated by the OIG. Due to the criminal investigation being conducted by MDPD, the OIG did not commence any activity until the completion of the criminal investigation on January 4, 2013.

ALLEGATION AND FINDINGS

Allegation

Circuit 11 Child Protective Investigator Jean LaCroix engaged in conduct unbecoming a Department employee as a result of alleged unlawful sexual activity with a Department Client. If supported, the allegation would constitute a

¹ The Florida Abuse Hotline serves as the central intake and referral point for all reports of suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children, disabled adults, and the elderly.

² The Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) is Florida's federally funded Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) and, as such, is the state's primary record for each investigation and case pursuant to Rule 65C-30.001 (134), Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.). The SACWIS contains all reports, investigations, and cases regarding child abuse, neglect or abandonment and pertinent information regarding all activities involved in investigative and case management functions.

³ Effective July 12, 2012, Mr. LaCroix was no longer employed by the Department.

⁴ The child's identity is being withheld from this report and is identified only as "the Department Client."

⁵ MDPD Detective Janette Azcuy conducted the criminal investigation.

violation of Rule 60L-36.005 (1) and (3)(e), (f), and (g), F.A.C.; Paragraph 1-8 (b)(5), and (6), CFOP 60-55; and a potential violation of § 794.05 (1)(4), F.S.

Findings

The information obtained **supports** the allegation.

Testimony of Circuit 11 Operations Program Administrator Sonia De Escobar

Ms. Escobar confirmed the information contained in the Introduction section of this report.

Testimony of the Department Client⁶

The Department Client indicated that she first met Mr. LaCroix when he was assigned to her case in September 2011 (FSFN Intake ID #2011-219729⁷). The Department Client related that she and Mr. LaCroix exchanged cellular telephone numbers soon thereafter (unknown exact date) and she would call him if she needed anything, or to tell him about problems she was having. The Department Client related that subsequently, she told Mr. LaCroix that she liked him and wanted to have sex with him. The Department Customer recounted that Mr. LaCroix initially told her that he could not have sex with her because if anyone found out, he would go to jail. According to the Department Client, she convinced Mr. LaCroix that no one would find out and, as a result, she and Mr. LaCroix began a sexual relationship. The Department Client related that Mr. LaCroix would pick her up on various days from Miami Northwest High School and then take her to his residence where they engaged in sexual intercourse and fellatio; after which Mr. LaCroix would return her to the school. The Department Client estimated that she and Mr. LaCroix engaged in sexual intercourse approximately 10 to 20 times between October 2011 and February 2012. The Department Client related that she was relocated to a new foster home in February 2012 (unknown exact date) and has not had sexual intercourse with Mr. LaCroix since that time.

The Department Client advised that she called Mr. LaCroix on May 3, 2012, at which time Mr. LaCroix told her that his telephone calls were being monitored and Mr. LaCroix asked that she (the Department Client) call him from a different telephone number. According to the Department Client, Mr. LaCroix told her not to tell anyone that they had sex because he would lose his job.

The Department Client added that she met with Mr. LaCroix on May 4, 2012, at which time Mr. LaCroix said that he would give her \$1,000.00 if she did not tell anyone from the Department or from law enforcement that they had a sexual relationship.

Testimony of Former Circuit 11 Child Protective Investigator Jean LaCroix⁸

⁶ The Department Client was not interviewed by the OIG Investigator. The Department Client was interviewed by Detective Azcuy and the Department Client's testimony is included in MDPD report #PD120507173869 as part of the criminal investigation. The Department Client's testimony was taken from the MDPD report.

⁷ FSFN Intake ID #2011-219729 was initiated on September 28, 2011 as a Special Conditions Referral and closed on October 28, 2011.

⁸ Mr. LaCroix was not interviewed by the OIG Investigator due to the criminal investigation that was conducted by MDPD, which resulted in Mr. LaCroix's arrest on June 30, 2012 for Unlawful Sexual Activity with a Minor.

Documents Reviewed by the OIG Investigator**➤ Miami-Dade Police Department Report #PD120507173869**

On January 4, 2013, the OIG Investigator obtained a copy of MDPD report #PD120507173869, which was initiated on May 5, 2012. The report details the MDPD criminal investigation.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

As a result of the criminal investigation conducted by MDPD, Mr. LaCroix was arrested on July 12, 2012 and charged with five counts of Unlawful Sexual Activity with a Minor. Mr. LaCroix is currently incarcerated at the Metro West Detention Center and was scheduled for trial during the week of March 11-15, 2013.

INSPECTOR GENERAL'S COMMENTS

The allegation that Circuit 11 Child Protective Investigator Jean LaCroix engaged in conduct unbecoming a Department employee as a result of alleged unlawful sexual activity with a Department Client is **supported**. The finding is based on a review of witness interviews, which are included in Miami-Dade Police Department report #PD120507173869, and the fact that Mr. LaCroix was criminally charged with five counts of Unlawful Sexual Activity with a Minor.

It is recommended that the Southern Regional Managing Director review the findings of this investigation and ensure that Mr. LaCroix's personnel record(s) reflect the findings of this investigation.

This investigation has been conducted in accordance with the ASSOCIATION OF INSPECTORS GENERAL Principles & Quality Standards for Investigations.